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Patrisse Cullors Visits

First activist to use
#BlackLivesMatter
tag talks in Portland

By Arashi Young
Of The Skanner News

It started with a love note.

When George Zimmerman was acquitted for the death of Trayvon Martin, organizer Alicia Garza said it felt like a punch to the gut. Reacting to cynicism and resignation, she wrote the love note calling for the end of the killing of Black people.

When Patrisse Cullors read the line in the note, “Black lives matter,” she had a flash of inspiration. She created the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and shared it with the world. Since then the Black Lives Matter movement has become the center of race advocacy.

Cullors recently visited Portland and met with community organizers to discuss the growing movement and its future.

Cullors said she is part of a generation living in the middle of the war on drugs and the war on gangs. She grew up watching the rise of violence and the destruction of her community. When Cullors, Garza and Opal Tometi founded the group, they wanted to honor and include all Black lives.

“We understood we needed to have mass movement as part of Black liberation,” she said. “It was going to take all Black lives to stop the genocide of Black people, inside this country and outside of this country.”

The meeting was organized by the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, which funds social justice movements in Oregon. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Black Lives Matter Portland chapter, Don’t Shoot PDX, the Portland chapter of the NAACP, the PSU Black Student Union, and the Black chapter of PFLAG.

Sharon Gary-Smith of MRG talked about the challenges of organizing around racial justice in one of the Whitest cities in the United States.

“Here in Portland, we have some unique and very different kind of circumstances, but we still know that ‘Black Lives Matter’

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MARCH



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

About 100 people showed up Oct. 11 for the 8th Annual Abolish Columbus Day March and Rally. The marchers walked from Westlake Park to Peter Steinbrueck Park in Seattle. Seattle and Portland are two of the dozen or so cities who celebrate Indigenous People’s Day instead of Columbus Day. Seattle’s city council voted to rename the federal holiday in 2014 and Portland’s city council voted on the change last week.

Thousands of Inmates Freed Early

Sentencing overhaul prompts release of those with drug sentences

ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A push to overhaul criminal sentencing is prompting the early release of thousands of federal drug prisoners, including some whom prosecutors once described as threats to society, according to an Associated Press review of court records.

About 6,000 inmates are due to be freed from custody in the coming month, the result of changes made last year to guidelines that provide judges with

recommended sentences for specific crimes.

Federal officials say roughly 40,000 inmates could be eligible for reduced sentences in coming years.

Many of them are small-time drug dealers targeted by an approach to drug enforcement now condemned by many as overly harsh and expensive.

But an AP analysis of nearly 100 court cases also identified defendants who carried semi-automatic weapons, had past convictions for robbery and

other crimes, moved cocaine shipments across states, and participated in international heroin smuggling.

Supporters of lighter drug sentences say there’s no evidence that longer punishment protects public safety.

Studies show that inmates released early aren’t more likely to reoffend than those who serve their entire sentences.

Still, the broad spectrum of defendants granted early release — including some about whom prosecutors not long ago raised

dire warnings — underscores the complex decisions confronting the government as it pursues an overhaul of drug sentencing.

“I’m a career prosecutor. I’m a law-and-order girl, and I believe that you need to send dangerous people to prison for a very long time,” said Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates.

“But I think that we need to be smart about deciding who are those dangerous people.”

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Court Reinstates NYPD Surveillance Suit

Spying compared to scrutiny of Japanese-Americans during WWII

MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A federal appeals court on Tuesday reinstated a lawsuit challenging the New York Police Department’s surveillance of Muslim groups in New Jersey after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, saying any resulting harm came from the city’s tactics, not the media’s reporting

of them.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, reversing a judge’s decision last year to dismiss the case, found the Muslim plaintiffs raised sufficient allegations of religious-freedom and equal-protection violations and put the case on track for trial. The court compared the spying to other instances of heightened scrutiny of religious and ethnic groups, including Japanese-Americans during World

War II.

In dismissing the lawsuit, U.S. District Judge William Martini had concluded the police could not keep watch “on Muslim terrorist activities without monitoring the Muslim community itself” and concurred with the city in blaming reporting by The Associated Press, which exposed the surveillance program, for any harm.

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